



# THE CONNECTICUT PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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March 7, 2012

Dear Members of the Committee on Human Services:

My name is Traci Cipriano, and I am writing as Chair of the Connecticut Psychological Association's (CPA) Legislative Committee, as well as a practicing psychologist in the state of Connecticut, **in support of the increased protections of and services to victims of domestic violence**, as proposed in **Raised Bill No. 5453, AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA INFORMED CARE**.

Raised Bill 5453 proposes changes to arrest protocols when peace officers respond to a report of domestic violence. These changes place the burden of the arrest decision solely on the responding officer, and relieve the victim of this burden. A victim's decision to pursue an arrest is complicated by fear, which may result in the victim not pursuing an arrest, even when justified and clearly in the best interest of the victim and any children involved.

In addition, Raised Bill 5453 provides for comprehensive trauma care services to victims, including treatment, education, and prevention measures. Domestic violence is prevalent across all socio-economic groups. Universally, victims are fearful for their lives and the lives of their children, while at the same time they often have great difficulty leaving their abusers. Domestic violence has a severe, longstanding psychological impact on victims (including children who are present but not directly involved). The services proposed in this legislation are much needed so that victims can get the treatment they need, future incidents of domestic violence can be minimized, and in some cases, the cycle of abuse can be stopped. Importantly, Raised Bill 5453 also provides for treatment of offenders in an effort to minimize re-offending behaviors.

Finally, Raised Bill 5453 provides for comprehensive training to police officers, including the establishment of formalized policies and procedures concerning domestic violence. In addition, the proposed legislation requires trainings for officers on the importance of enforcement, the psychological aspects of domestic violence, as well as available legal remedies and trauma-related services. Police officers are usually the first responders to a domestic violence call, and their role comes with a great deal of power. The decisions of responding officers regarding how to proceed at the scene and what information they provide to the victim and offender, have a major, possibly life-or-death, impact on victims, including any children involved.